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Nixon Warns of Aid Cut To Drug-Dealer Nations

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President Nixon today warned that he will not hesitate to cut off all American economic and military aid to any government whose leaders participate in or protect the drug traffic.

He also praised the Central Intelligence Agency for its role in fighting international drug traffic and said the agency has been "much maligned."

He said the CIA has "performed superbly" in fighting the international drug trade. "In the field of intelligence," he added, "we always find that the failures are those that are publicized. Its successes by definition must always be secret. In this area, there are many successes, and particularly ones of which this agency can be very proud."

Critics of the CIA have charged that the Agency has aided drug traffickers in Southeast Asia to help maintain alliances.

He spoke of "fine initial progress" in immobilizing and destroying sources of drugs coming into the United States.

He said, "France, Paraguay, Laos, Thailand and Turkey are just a few examples of the many countries where the work of American officials, from the ambassador down, in partnership with local officials, has produced important breakthroughs — huge heroin seizures, key arrests, or — in Turkey's case — the courageous decision to eradicate the opium poppy itself."

The President said he considers keeping dangerous drugs out of the United States "just as important as keeping armed enemy forces from landing in the United States" because the drugs can endanger the lives of young Americans just as much as would an invading army.

Speaking at an international conference on drug control at the State Department, he asked American officials from around the world to convey to foreign officials with whom they deal "this personal message" from me:

"Any government whose leaders participate in or protect the activities of those who contribute to our drug program should know that the President of the United States is required by statute to suspend all American economic and military assistance to such a regime.

"I shall not hesitate to comply fully and promptly with that statute."

Nixon said he has been "cracking the whip" over government agencies involved in dealing with dangerous drugs to get them to "quit fighting each other and start fighting the problem."

Citing some results, he said the number of arrests of drug traffickers in the last fiscal year was double the number arrested in 1969, and the seizures of heroin and other illicit drugs are at an all-time high.

"Very sharp increases in the prices of heroin throughout the eastern United States indicate that the supply is drying up and that the pressure is on the criminal drug trade," he said.

Nixon's statements apparently were in response to a statement yesterday by Democratic presidential candidate Sen. George S. McGovern.

McGovern said the number of heroin addicts in the United States had doubled since 1968 and charged that Southeast Asia had become a major source of heroin because the administration would not crack down on the narcotics trade in Laos, Thailand and South Vietnam.

Nixon made no direct reference to McGovern's charges, but his comments appeared to be a sharp counterattack.

The President's praise of the CIA role follows claims and official denials that the agency's Air America has helped transport heroin in Southeast Asia.

In a book called "The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia," that was published recently, Arthur W. McCoy raised the question of whether CIA operatives knowingly engaged in such traffic to help maintain alliances.

More specifically, McCoy accused officials in governments of U.S. allies in Southeast Asia—particularly in Saigon—of profiting from the traffic.

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